

Cooperative Science Services, LLC Dolphinfish Research Program

Made possible by a grant from Marine Ventures Foundation

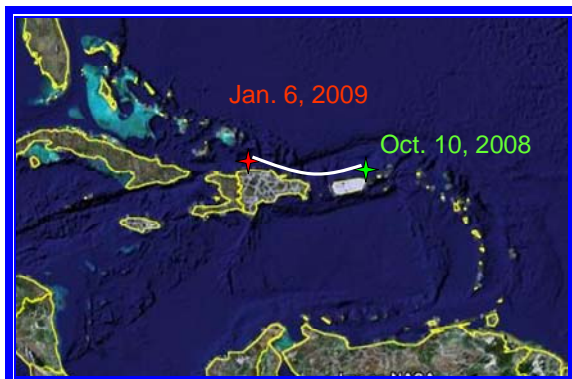
January 2009



Beating the Odds

This research program has been based on numbers. For every 100 dolphin tagged by anglers, two to three will be reported recovered. This return rate is on the optimistic side because it is based largely on recoveries from the U.S. East Coast. This area probably has the highest offshore recreational fishing effort compared to most of the other coastal areas of the North Atlantic, Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico. Lower levels of effort translate into a lower probability for tagged fish to be recovered. Recoveries in the poorer areas face an additional hurdle: most of the local fishermen lack the ability to communicate in writing or on the Internet, especially when complicated by a foreign language.

The last issue of the Dolphinfish Research Program newsletter carried an article about Manuel Botello, who is trying to get fishermen in Puerto Rico to tag dolphin for the study. Manuel has now beaten the odds.



The first recorded movement of a dolphin along the north shore of the northern Caribbean Islands.

Manuel and the crew of the *Missing Angel* tagged their first two dolphin on October 10, 2008, during a fishing trip off San Juan. The second fish tagged that day, a 22-inch fork length cow reeled in by Raymond Baez, was recovered on January 6, 2009, by Tito Gomez of Punta Rusia, Dominican Republic. Gomez caught the fish 41 miles north of Punta Rusia in the channel between the Bahamas Bank and the Dominican Republic. During its 88 days of liberty, the fish had traveled 381 miles westward and was estimated to have grown 14 inches.



Hilario "Tito" Gomez sits on his fishing boat Blue Angel in Punta Rusia on the north shore of the Dominican Republic, where he bases his fishing.

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This recapture represents a very important piece of information about the movements of dolphin in the Western North Atlantic. It is the first documented movement for dolphinfish occurring along the north shore of the northern Caribbean Islands. This recapture indicates that at least some dolphin are moving westward in the fall and winter through the channel along the southern Bahamas Banks.

There is another hero in this story, the key player in getting the recapture reported. Ms. Alicia Srinivas is a volunteer for the U.S. Peace Corps working with people in the Punta Rusia area. Tito Gomez contacted her about the recovery, and she forwarded the information using the Internet. This is just another way the Peace Corps works to make this a better world.

Top Taggers for 2008

More than 200 anglers fishing aboard 93 different sports fishing boats provided dolphin to be tagged as part of the 2008 Dolphin Tagging Study. A total of 51 anglers each provided five or more fish for tagging, thereby earning a program T-shirt. The crews of 24 boats tagged 10 or more dolphin during the year, earning the boat's captain a T-shirt.

Eleven boats tagged 30 or more dolphin during 2008 (Table 1). The crews of these boats tagged two-thirds of the dolphin marked and released in 2008. Three of the 11 boats were charter vessels, with the top tagging boat of the year being among them. The Miami, Florida, based charter boat *Thomas Flyer*, owned by Capt. Jimbo Thomas, tagged a total 331 dolphin to earn the top position in the 2008 tagging activity. This was just 36 fish fewer than the number he tagged in 2007. Because

Table 1. Number of fish tagged by boats tagging 30+.

Name	Type	Captain	City	State	NO.
Thomas Flyer	Charter	Jimbo Thomas	Miami	FL	331
Draggin Dreams	Private	Don Brown	Pembroke Pines	FL	107
Irish Wake	Private	Tim Heiser	Plantation	FL	100
Got Ta Go	Charter	Rob Harris	Cudjoe Key	FL	58
Killin' Time	Private	Don Gates	Conroe	TX	55
Ballyhoo	Private	Bill Baugh	Ramrod Key	FL	54
Bouncer's Dusky	Charter	Bouncer Smith	Miami	FL	47
Summer Girl	Private	Steve Leasure	Charleston	SC	46
Reel Gator	Private	Tony Zara	Orlando	FL	43
Knot Yet	Private	Dave Wilson	Andros Island	BA	37
Rock Boat	Private	Richard DeLizza	Weston	FL	36

Draggin Dreams chose to be recognized for Top Angler Award, the Top Private Boat Award goes to the *Irish Wake*, owned by Tim Heiser of Plantation, Florida, for tagging 100 dolphin. Tim's wife, Michelle, supported the boat's tagging effort by providing the most fish (53 dolphin).

Top Boat Award for tagging the most fish in an area other than off the east coast of Florida goes to the Charleston, South Carolina, based private boat, *Summer Girl*. Owned by John Smith of Walterboro, South Carolina, and Steve Leasure of Charleston, the boat's crew tagged 46 dolphin off the Palmetto State in 2008.

The top 10 anglers provided 15 or more fish for tagging.(Table 2). For the fourth consecutive year, the Top Angler Award goes to Justin Brown of Pembroke Pines, Florida, who teamed up with his father, Don, aboard the *Draggin Dreams* to tag 107 fish. They have developed an effective system whereby Don serves as the tagger/data recorder while Justin serves as the angler.

Table 2. Top Anglers providing dolphin for tagging.

Name	City	State	Tagged
Justin Brown	Pembroke Pines	FL	107
Mark Mitchell	Orlando	FL	69
Rob Harris	Cudjoe Key	FL	56
Michelle Heiser	Ft. Lauderdale	FL	53
Tim Heiser	Ft. Lauderdale	FL	37
William Baugh	Ramrod Key	FL	34
Dave Wilson	Andros Island	BA	23
Don Gates	Chuluota	FL	18
Larry Laffler	Palm City	FL	16
Allen Lewis	Orlando	FL	15

Year-end Awards



Through the generosity of Shimano Fishing Tackle and the Don Coffey Company and Star Rods and the Sea Striker Fishing Tackle Company, the Dolphin Tagging Study is proud to present to the above winners a Shimano TLD50 LRSA 2 speed reel on a standup Custom Crafted 30 - 50 Star Rod. Congratulations!

Donations to the Dolphin Study are Fully Tax-Deductible
Make checks out to:
HH Reef Foundation/Dolphin Study

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2008 Dolphin Tagging Tally by Zones.

Zone	Area	Southern Limit	Northern Limit	Number Tagged
1	Bahamas	22N	28N	163
2	FL Straits	23N	25N	378
3	South Florida	25N	27N	575
4	Central Florida	27N	30N	39
5	North FL & GA	30N	32N	48
6	Southern SC	32N	33N	90
7	N. SC - S. NC	33N	35N	17
8	Northern NC	35N	36.5N	10
9	Virginia	36.5N	38N	8
10	N. Mid-Atlantic	38N+		4
11	Gulf of Mexico			17
12	W Central Atlantic			7
13	Caribbean Sea			5
	Total			1361

Send in Your Favorite Tagging Photos

The Dolphinfish Research Program would like to have your favorite photo of tagging dolphin or trophy dolphin that you have caught, especially those caught by women and children. These photos will be used in the newsletter and other publications of the program. High resolution digital images in at least 1MB file size should be e-mailed to the program at the e-mail address shown below. Please provide the names of all people in the pictures and a narrative about the scene.

Program Web Site Updated

The introductory page "About the Program," which provides a comprehensive look at the purpose and operation of the program, has been updated including new photos. This page gives the history behind the program along with some of the amazing findings of the research. It also presents the future direction of the program through the goals and objectives for the next two years.

During 2008 several updates were made to the program's Web site. The "How to Tag" page was completely reworked and expanded to provide a more comprehensive tutorial on handling and tagging the fish. The most recent major presentation summarizing the findings of the Dolphin Tagging Study at the 5th World Recreational Fisheries Conference has been posted on the "Study Results" page for access by fishermen.

More updates are planned for the Web site in 2009 as new dimensions are added to the research program.



Thanks to All 2008 Financial Supporters

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